

ability and success. Of the latter his collection was well known, after the addition to it of those of Canon Tristram and of his brother, to be one of the richest in certain groups in Europe. By his will Mr. Crowley left to the Trustees of the British Museum power to select all such specimens from his cabinets of birds'-eggs as were required to make their series more complete, and we are informed that the National Collection will greatly benefit by this generous bequest.

It is an interesting fact that Mr. Crowley's mother was the daughter of Dr. Curtis, of Alton, who attended Gilbert White during his last illness.

XXVII.—*Letters, Extracts, Notices, &c.*

WE have received the following letters, addressed to 'The Editors':—

SIRS,—A large number of Nutcrackers (*Nucifraga caryocatactes*) have visited this country during the last four months of this year. They probably arrived at the end of September, as the first specimens were obtained quite early in October.

They spread all over the country, so that examples were observed in all the eleven provinces of Holland. The birds, as would be expected, all belong to the slender-billed form; at least all those that I could examine or get examined exhibit the characteristic width of the white tips of the outer tail-feathers, as is usual in the Siberian form, the extent of the white in all cases exceeding 2 cm.

These birds seemed to feed largely in this country on the seeds of different species of pine-trees. One specimen, which I observed in this neighbourhood for several weeks, was constantly seen gathering them from the cones of *Pinus strobus* and *Picea excelsa*.

The bird suspends itself with its feet to the extremities of the branches which bear the cones, takes one off with its bill and flies away with it, generally to the ground in oak brush-wood, where it proceeds to eat the seeds. Those of the

Weymouth pine seem to be its special favourites, and it has been observed to roost in the oak brushwood near these pines at a height of only 10 or 12 feet from the ground, notwithstanding that tall trees abound all round.

Although one particular bird still stays in this neighbourhood, I understand that at the present moment the greater number of these migrants have left this country—greatly thinned in numbers, I am afraid!

Yours &c.,

F. E. BLAAUW.

Gooilust, December 1st, 1900.

[The irruption of *Nucifraga caryocatactes* in the autumn of last year has been likewise recorded in many parts of Northern Germany. See "Wanderzug des schlankschnäbeligen Tannenhähers," by Prof. Dr. R. Blasius, in 'Zeitschr. für Orn. u. prakt. Geflügelzucht,' January 1891.—EDD.]

SIRS,—I see that in the notice of Dr. Bowdler Sharpe's article on Birds in the recently published 'Monograph of Christmas Island,' you remark that "It is a pity that the distribution of the occasional visitors is not more fully stated in the monograph, in order to give us some better idea of the origin of the bird-life of Christmas Island." I should like to point out that the general facts of the distribution of the Christmas Island birds are stated on page 299 of the Monograph, and that, in most cases, the range is given in the list of species on page 305.

Yours &c.,

CHAS. W. ANDREWS.

British Museum (Natural History),
Cromwell Road, S.W.,
December 12th, 1900.

[This is quite true—we had unfortunately omitted to notice the paragraph about the distribution of the Bird-life given in the chapter on "The Geographical Relations of the Fauna and Flora of Christmas Island" (p. 299) of Mr. Andrews' Report. But it would have been better if attention had been directed to these remarks in the chapter on the Birds.—EDD.]

SIRS,—In July 1894 my late brother, Alfred Crawhall Chapman, gave an account in 'The Ibis' (p. 339) of a short ornithological visit which we had made to West Jutland in the preceding spring, and, among other things, recorded our having met with a small band of Pelicans in that country. Shortly afterwards ('Ibis,' 1895, p. 294) this statement was questioned—in language certainly not very friendly or fraternal—by a Danish naturalist, Herr Herluf Winge, of Copenhagen. Six springs have since elapsed, yet Herr Winge, though deprecating intrusions by foreign ornithologists, has not afforded us any further information as to the Pelicans that visit the Jutland coast. I have looked in vain for any evidence that he has even tried to solve this interesting question; and have been driven to the conclusion that, if we "Uitlanders" do not help ourselves, we may expect but little from scientific sources in Denmark—unless, indeed, it be sarcasms, "childlike and bland."

The object of this letter is to suggest that the Jutland Pelicans would form a thoroughly interesting objective to any British ornithologist who would undertake a journey thither during the coming spring. The time required is not more than 30 or 36 hours from London, and I have given full details ('Ibis,' 1894, p. 339) as to the exact locality where we found the Pelicans on May 8, 1893. As stated at the time, the local fishermen knew the Pelicans perfectly well, called them by the Danish equivalent of our own name, and told us that, although the birds appeared there almost every spring, they knew nothing themselves of their actually nesting there. Whether they do so or not I can, of course, express no opinion; but it seems regrettable that so interesting a problem in ornithology should be allowed to remain in doubt—and that almost within sight of our own shores. An easy journey of a week or ten days might suffice to settle the question, and during that period, I may add, a British ornithologist would also enjoy many truly delightful scenes of bird-life that can no longer be met with in our own islands.

I am sending a copy (see p. 356) of a rough sketch of the

Fig. 30.



Pelicans in Jutland.

Pelicans as seen, surrounded by Gulls and Grey Geese, on the Jutland coast, which I had prepared for my book 'Wild Norway.'

Yours &c.,

ABEL CHAPMAN.

South Bailey, Durham,
December 15th, 1900.

SIRS,—We beg leave to announce that for several years past we have been working upon the 'Birds of Yorkshire,' and that we hope to be able to publish the results of our investigations in book-form at an early date.

(Signed) { OXLEY GRABHAM.
 { J. BACKHOUSE.

The Nurseries, York,
December 19th, 1900.

SIRS,—In reading over Messrs. H. C. Robinson's and W. S. Laverock's interesting account of some North Queensland birds ('Ibis,' 1900, p. 632), I notice that they are doubtful as to whether *Cracticus quoyi* is found in North-east Australia or not. But I think that it has been proved conclusively that this bird does exist there, as well as *C. rufescens*, for both Mr. C. Burnard and Mr. R. Hislop have found black young in the nest, both at Cooktown and Somerset. The natives of that district assured me that they had frequently found the young black. From what I have observed personally, I should say that *C. quoyi* is more abundant in the northern portion of the coast districts of Queensland, and that *C. rufescens* is the most plentiful in the more central districts—near Cairns, for instance. The young *C. rufescens* probably change their brown plumage for black when they are three years old, and are then very difficult to tell from *C. quoyi* without careful comparison.

Yours &c.,

D. LE SOUËF.

Melbourne, December 19th, 1900.

SIRS,—In a notice of the last part published of the 'Birds of Africa' (above, p. 146), you remark: "'Parisomidæ' is

a new family formed to contain *Parisoma*, '*Alcippe*,' and their allies. But we cannot quite agree in uniting the African *Lioptili* (which are certainly closely allied to *Parisoma*) to the Asiatic form '*Alcippe*.'"

This remark is, in my opinion, rather hasty, unless some characters can be mentioned for separating *Lioptilus* from *Alcippe*. There are good series of both the type-species in the British Museum, and the results I arrived at, on comparing them, have been fully given (B. Afr. ii. pp. 206-208).

Not finding any character for distinguishing *Lioptilus* from *Alcippe*, I adopted Dr. R. B. Sharpe's "Group IX. LIOTRICHES. The Hill Tits" (Cat. B. M. vii. p. 596) as a family, and, as I include in it *Parisoma*, the first described genus to which any of its members belong, I call the family PARISOMIDÆ.

Yours &c.,

G. E. SHELLEY.

39 Egerton Gardens, S.W.

The Great Belted Kingfisher in Holland.—In the last number of 'Aquila' (1901, p. 194) is recorded the very interesting fact of the occurrence of a specimen of the Great Belted Kingfisher (*Ceryle alcyon*) near Arnheim, in Holland, on December 29th, 1899, which, to judge by appearances, could not have been an imported individual. We know that this bird has already secured a place in the 'British List' on the faith of two examples shot in Ireland in 1845 (see Saunders's Man. B. B. ed. 2, p. 280). So many Nearctic stragglers have been already met with on the western coasts of Europe that we see no difficulty in accepting the veracity of this fresh arrival—the more so as birds of this species are seldom, if ever, brought to Europe alive in captivity.

Birds of the outlying Islands of New Zealand.—The Earl of Ranfurly, Governor of New Zealand, and Honorary Member of the Zoological Society of London, has lately returned to Wellington from a month's trip round the outlying islands belonging to his jurisdiction. He was ac-

accompanied by Capt. Hutton, of the Christchurch Museum, Dr. Collins, and some of his staff, and visited the Snares, and the Campbell, Antipodes, Auckland, and Bounty groups. At the Auckland Islands he is stated to have obtained two specimens of the rare Duck *Mergus australis* (B. M. C. B. xxvii. p. 484), of which but few examples are known. Besides the single specimen in the British Museum (obtained by v. Hügel, *cf.* P. Z. S. 1881, p. 1), there are in this country, we believe, only one skin of this species at Cambridge, and a pair in the Tring Museum.

Capt. Boyd Alexander at Kumasi.—Capt. Boyd Alexander, whose departure for the seat of war in Ashanti we mentioned last year (see ‘Ibis, 1900, p. 572), was at Kumasi at the date of his last letters. He says that he has had enough fighting for the present, and has reverted to the less glorious occupation of bird-collecting. Capt. Alexander has already sent some 400 skins to the care of Mr. Ogilvie Grant, and will, no doubt, bring with him an excellent set of field-notes on his return home. We are informed that there are no obvious novelties in the series, but that it includes examples of many scarce and little-known species.

Recent Change of Habits in Buphaga.—Mr. S. L. Hinde, of the British East African Protectorate, writes in ‘Nature’ (lxii. p. 336) as follows:—“The following case of wild birds changing their habits may be of interest. The common Rhinoceros-bird (*Buphaga erythrorhyncha*) here formerly fed on ticks and other parasites which infest game and domestic animals; occasionally, if an animal had a sore, the birds would probe the sore to such an extent that they sometimes killed the animal. Since the cattle-plague destroyed the immense herds in Ukambani, and nearly all the sheep and goats were eaten during the late famine, the Rhinoceros-birds, deprived of their habitual food, have become carnivorous, and now any domestic animal not constantly watched is killed by them. Perfectly healthy animals have their ears eaten down to the bone, while holes are torn in their backs

and in the femoral regions. Native boys amuse themselves sometimes by shooting these birds on the cattle with arrows, the points of which are passed through a piece of wood or ivory for about half an inch, so that if the animal is struck instead of the bird no harm is done. But the few thus killed do not seem in any way to affect the numbers of these pests."

Decoys in Chitral, India.—Col. Durand, in 'The Making of a Frontier,' writes:—"We passed many Wild-Duck decoys, at constructing which the Chitralis seem very clever. They run off a portion of the stream on to a flat field, making a pool twenty yards or so square, at one corner of which the water runs in. Here they place a wicker cage with a wide mouth and tunnel gradually tapering up stream. They stick decoy Ducks about the open water, and when the Wild Ducks settle, drive them into the tunnel, catching sometimes two or three hundred at a time."

Falcon-catching in Chitral.—Col. Durand, in the same work, writes as follows:—"The method of catching is simple; a bird, according to the Chitralis, must be full-grown to be of any use, and caught when ranging for food. The trapper makes a little stone box in which he sits, a small hole being left in the roof, on which a chicken tied by the leg moves about, the string being in the man's hand below. After the Hawk or Falcon has seized his victim, the string is gently pulled, and, thinking that it is merely the chicken moving in his struggles to escape, the bird grips all the harder and is pulled to the hole, when the man below seizes it by the legs, and its liberty is over. The Chitralis are wonderfully clever at breaking their birds—I have seen one flown when captured not fully a week—and trust for taming them to keeping them awake. They keep a bird awake for three nights, constantly talking to it, and finally, when it is tamed by want of sleep and hunger, begin to feed it and to use the lure."